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UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION
OF
ROBERT A. SCOTT, DOMINIQUE CADE
and XIONGWEI HE
FOR
POLYVINYL ALCOHOL COMPOSITIONS

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A further disadvantage of the gelatin film and an unwanted limitation of its use is its high water vapour permeability, which results in a high rate of water vapour transport through the gelatine shell of capsules with a hygroscopic fill or of capsules stored in a humid environment. Results of experimental tests show that at 22°C by a difference of 50% in the RH between both sides of a 100 μm gelatine film during a period of 24 hours an amount of twice the gelatin film weight of water vapour is permeated through the film. Consequently, when capsules exposed to an open environment, the fill will take up moisture from the environment by permeation through the capsule shell until equilibrium is achieved.

Moisture take-up of the fill of a capsule by moisture
20 exchange with or permeation through the capsule shell may
adversely affect the properties of the fill: powder fills
may agglomerate or, more seriously, fills may undergo
chemical degradation e.g. by hydrolysis. Generally
pharmaceutical gelatin capsules therefore are to be stored
25 a dry environment.

The affinity of capsules and their fills and the moisture exchange between capsules and fills can be determined by the sorption-desorption isotherms for the materials of capsules and fills. For gelatine this is well described in the literature, e.g. in K. Ito & al., Chem. Pharm. Bull. 17

(3) 1969, 1134-37. M.J. Kontny & al., Int. J. Pharm. 54, 1989, 79-85 describe a mathematical model to predict the final relative water vapor pressure in a closed system for a multicomponent mixture of solids knowing the initial
5 water content for each component. From the final relative pressure and individual sorption-desorption isotherms, it is then possible to estimate the extent to which mixt. redistributes via the vapor phase among the various components.

10 Only few published studies are related to the permeability of hard gelatine capsules for water vapour. W.A. Strickland & al., J. Pharm. Sci., 51 (10) 1962, 1002-5 describes the water vapor diffusion through hard gelatin capsules and concludes that gelatine capsules offer little protection to
15 a hygroscopic fill from atmospheric water vapour. To overcome this drawback in WO 97/04755 it has been suggested to incorporate polyol additives into the composition of the gelatin film of hard gelatin capsules.

It is well known that PVA film compositions have extremely
20 low water vapour permeability, the lowest among known hydrosoluble film forming materials, and it is widely used for coating compositions, especially for pharmaceutical formulations like tablets as described in WO 96/01874.

EP-A-0 180 287 teaches the use of PVA in combination with
25 cellulose ethers in hard capsule film compositions. In this compositions, the setting of the dipping solution is achieved by thermal gelation of a cellulose ether like Hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC). However, to obtain acceptable setting properties of the film forming
30 composition, the HPMC content must be very high, even

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higher than the PVA content. Consequently the benefits of the properties of PVA will significantly be reduced in such compositions.

The problem of the invention is therefore the provision of polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) compositions for the use in pharmaceutical, veterinary, food, cosmetic or other products like films for wrapping food, aspics or jellies, preferably for predosed formulations like soft or hard capsules and wherein the PVA composition has in aqueous solution sufficient setting ability.

Summary of the invention

Surprisingly it has been found that the addition of a very small amount of a setting system, preferably ^{containing} ~~consisting of~~ hydrocolloids, most preferably polysaccharides, improves drastically the setting ability of PVA solutions for the production of hard PVA capsules by conventional dip moulding processes.

Object of the invention is therefore the provision of PVA/setting system compositions, preferably for films for pharmaceutical, veterinary, food, cosmetic or other products, especially preferred for the production of capsules for predosed forms, especially hard capsules.

Detailed Description of the Invention

The addition of a setting system, preferably based on polysaccharides, to PVA solutions enables the adaptation of specific and desired gelling properties for the production of hard PVA capsules by conventional dipping processes. For the production of such capsules it is extremely important that the film forming PVA solution remaining on the mould pins after dipping is prohibited from flowing down the

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pins. Otherwise the obtained film will not have the desired uniform thickness.

Consequently hard PVA capsules can be produced with the same equipment used for the production of conventional hard gelatine capsules in the range of same process conditions. Furthermore capsules produced from compositions of the instant invention have the same dimensional specifications and allow the use of the existing filling machinery and do not require specific and new equipment for the filling process.

The PVA capsules produced from the film forming compositions of the invention are consisting mainly of PVA and have consequently the properties of pure PVA such as extremely low water vapour permeability, low hygroscopicity, excellent piercing behaviour under low relative humidity, and in addition the advantages of gelatin capsules as exemplified.

The PVA concentration in the dipping solution is in a range of 10 to 60%, preferably in the range of 20 to 40% by weight.

The setting system ^{includes} ~~consists of~~ a hydrocolloid or mixtures of hydrocolloids and may contain in addition cations and/or sequestering agents.

Suitable hydrocolloids or mixtures producing synergistic properties may be selected from natural seaweeds, natural seed gums, natural plant exudates, natural fruit extracts, bio-synthetic gums, gelatins, bio-synthetic processed

especially 0.01 to 1% by weight in the aqueous PVA solution.

The preferred sequestering agents are ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid, acetic acid, boric acid, 5 citric acid, edetic acid, gluconic acid, lactic acid, phosphoric acid, tartaric acid or salts thereof, methaphosphates, dihydroxyethylglycine, lecithin or beta cyclodextrin and combinations thereof. Especially preferred is ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid or salts thereof or 10 citric acid or salts thereof. The amount is preferably 0.001 to 3%, especially 0.01 to 1% by weight of the dipping solution.

In addition, it is possible to incorporate a small quantity of an anti-foaming agent into the PVA solution to avoid the 15 forming of bubbles which may lead to visuable defects on the capsules.

The PVA capsules produced from the solutions as described will consequently contain by weight of 2 to 7% of water, 90 to 97% of PVA, 0.01 to 10%, preferably 0.05 to 5% of 20 hydrocolloids, 0.001 to 5%, preferably 0.01 to 3% of cations depending on the hydrocolloids used, and optionally 0.001 to 5%, preferably 0.01 to 3% of sequestering agents.

The inventive PVA compositions may contain in a further aspect additional pharmaceutically or food acceptable 25 colouring agents in the range of from 0 to 10% based upon the weight of the PVA. The colouring agents may be selected from azo-, quinophthalone-, triphenylmethane-, xanthene- or indigoid dyes, iron oxides or hydroxides, titanium dioxide or natural dyes or mixtures thereof. Examples are patent

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The inventive PVA capsules are also useful for encapsulating and sealing the two capsule halves in a

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10 The PVA capsule production and properties are demonstrated
by the following examples and tests:

Example 1: Hard PVA capsule production

To 3.50 kg of deionised water is added 5 g of potassium acetate (0.10% by weight in the solution), followed by addition of 10 g kappa-carrageenan (0.20% by weight) and 2 g of Montane 80 (as anti-foaming agent, 0.04%) under stirring at about 70°C. When kappa-carrageenan is dissolved, 1.35 kg (27% by weight) of PVA (which has a viscosity of 5 cps for a 4% aqueous solution at 20°C) is added at 60°C under slow stirring until the PVA is completely dissolved and the solution is defoamed.

The PVA solution thus prepared is then poured into a dipping dish of a pilot machine of conventional hard gelatine capsule production equipment. While keeping the temperature of dipping PVA solution at about 60°C, natural transparent hard PVA capsules of size 0 and size 3 were produced according to the conventional process with the same dimensional specifications to the conventional hard

gelatine capsules. Expectable from the extremely low water vapour permeability of PVA, the drying time of capsules is rather long.

Example 2: Water vapor sorption of hard PVA Capsules

- 5 The sorption isotherm of PVA capsules according to example 1 has been investigated and compared with the isotherm of hard gelatin capsules. The experiments demonstrate that PVA capsules have much lower hygroscopicity than HGC.

The results are shown in Figure 1.

10 **Example 3: Moisture take-up of hard capsule fills**

- The moisture take-up of fills encapsulated in PVA capsules or HGC has been investigated. The capsules were equilibrated at 22°C and 50%RH, then filled with dried polyvidone or dried maize starch. After closing, the capsules were stored at 22°C and 50%RH. The moisture take-up by the capsule fills have been determined by the increase of the weight of the filled capsule. The experiments demonstrate that PVA capsules have extremely low water vapour permeability.

- 20 The kinetics of moisture take-up are shown in Figure 2.

Table 1 shows the proportion of the permeabilities of PVA capsules and hard gelatin capsules:

Fill	Polyvidone	Maize starch
<u>Permeability (PVA cap.)</u>	0.017	0.027

Permeability (HGC)		
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Example 4: Piercing behaviour

Under B.I.L. inhalator test conditions, capsules of size 0 have been pierced and their behaviour examined. PVA capsules did not show any breaking or cracking in contrary
 5 to hard geletin capsules and have therefore excellent piercing behaviour even at low RH.

The test results are shown in Table 2:

Equilibrium RH (%)	50	10	2.5
HGC broken (%)	0	30	100
PVA cap. broken (%)	0	0	0

Example 5: Dissolution test

- 10 Under USP XXIII dissolution test conditions the behavior of PVA capsules size 0 and 3 filled with acetaminophen has been tested in deionised water at 37°C. PVA capsules have good dissolution properties.

The results of the dissolution tests are shown in Figure 3.

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